



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

SPURIOUS ANTIQUITIES IN BAGDAD.

BY EDGAR JAMES BANKS,
The University of Chicago.

Four-fifths of all the antiquities offered for sale in Bagdad are spurious. This is the conclusion reached after three months spent in visiting dozens of shops of antiquity manufacturers and dealers, and after an examination of hundreds of statues, bas-reliefs, clay and stone tablets, inscribed bronze rings, stone vases, seal cylinders, and objects unlike anything which the ancient world ever produced. One would suppose that Bagdad, surrounded as it is by the ruins of the ancient Babylonian cities, would have enough genuine antiquities without producing imitations. This is precisely the reason why the antiquity forger flourishes here. A continuous stream of his products is making its way from Bagdad to the private collections of Europe, and more than one successful piece has found a conspicuous place in the show-case of a great national museum.

Assyriology had hardly come into existence when this illegitimate offspring appeared. The early forgers confined their energies largely to the manufacture of tablets, and as a knowledge of the cuneiform was not deemed necessary, they merely molded the clay, and, stamping upon it a few wedge-shaped marks, produced an object which could deceive none but themselves. The next step was to cast the tablets, and in this they were more successful. They were unable, however, entirely to remove the traces of the casting marks, the characters were less sharp, and the weight and the peculiar salty taste of the original were lacking. When the tablets from Telloh were found in such large quantities, the genuine article became so cheap that for the moment the imitation of the ordinary "contract" practically ceased.

The manufacture of seal cylinders has been a profitable source of revenue increasing with the European demand for these ancient art treasures. The simplest method of imitation is by molding colored glass, or a composition resembling granite, but at the best the objects thus produced are crude. The more

successful imitations are engraved from fragments of larger antiquities or from stones found in the hills of Upper Mesopotamia. The engraver may either copy a design from a genuine cylinder or originate one of his own, and in either case detection may be difficult, for seal cylinders of almost every kind of stone, of all grades of workmanship, and with an unlimited variety of designs have been discovered. Although in this line his chance of success is the greatest, he finds difficulty in boring the hole in the center of the stone, or, boring in from both ends, he cannot join it well in the center, or he fails to produce the exact effect upon the edges of the hole which are frequently worn away by constant rubbing. In purchasing a seal cylinder not only should the material and workmanship be examined, but especially the design should be studied—a test which only the expert familiar with Babylonian mythology can employ.

In very recent years the forger has directed his energy to statue-making. The material which he employs is a soft limestone or marble. His design is taken either from the illustrations of the monuments of Nineveh, Khorsabad, and Nimrud, or from his own imagination. The face of the statue, if of a man, is usually bearded in the Assyrian style, the dress is more or less Greek or Roman, the eyes are not well placed, and the entire surface of the statue has an unmistakable yellowish tint produced by an application of acid. Occasionally the statue is of a female figure, sometimes seated, sometimes leaning against a post, or in some other position which the forger assumes would be appropriate for a Babylonian lady to assume. Frequently a trace of an inscription, too faint to read, accompanies the statue, or the head is broken off, or an arm is lacking, to give it an air of genuineness. Of the fifty or more statues now for sale in Bagdad, nearly all were made by a Persian named Riza who has succeeded in disposing of most of his work to the native Bagdad antiquity dealers.

Just at the present moment the energy of Riza and the other Persian engravers in Bagdad and Kerbela is directed to the copying of stone tablets and vase inscriptions, the originals of which from Telloh, Abu Habba, and Babylon have fallen into their hands. Instead of an exact copy, occasionally a line from another inscription is inserted so carefully that detection is exceedingly difficult. The freshness of the inscription, or the

marks of acid which may have been added to give it the appearance of age, are about the only clues. Quite as difficult to detect is an inscription which may be copied on an ancient vase or other ancient object which previously bore no inscription, and here also only the recent marks of the chisel or of acids, or some careless oversight of the engraver, as the crowding of the characters, the division of the words, or the shallowness of his lines, betrays his work.

Fortunately for the archæologist, most of the forgeries are still in the hands of the illicit antiquity dealers in Bagdad, and there they are likely to remain. However, the dealer eagerly watches the advent of the stranger, displays his wares, and carefully explains how he dug up this statue at Abu Habba, and how that stone tablet was sent by a friend from Telloh, or that vase was stolen by a workman from the Germans at Babylon. If the stranger is too wise to buy, it is shipped, whenever opportunity may offer, along with some genuine antiquities to London or Paris or Berlin, and there its fate depends upon the shrewdness and training of the archæologist into whose hands it happens to fall.

BAGDAD, August 22, 1904.

A VASE INSCRIPTION FROM WARKA.

BY EDGAR JAMES BANKS,
The University of Chicago.

An Arab woman who was recently searching for antiquities at Warka, the ancient Erech, discovered an inscribed bowl-shaped vase of a beautiful greenish-tinted onyx. The vase was sold to a passing Arab for a karan, or eight cents, and finally it came into the possession of a Bagdad collector, who claims that he purchased it for four liras (\$17.60). It stands 10 centimeters high; it is 16.5 in diameter at the top, and 6 at the bottom; its walls average 1 centimeter in thickness. When found, the base was broken off, but it is now fitted to the upper part, forming a perfect specimen of a vase used in the temple service during the fifth millennium B. C.

A small portion of its polished surface near the rim has been cut away to obliterate an inscription which once stood there, yet